

CPYRGHT

It's a 'People's War'

Allegiance of the People Is Essential to Viet Victory

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Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge has chosen as one of his principal advisers an unorthodox military man who is convinced that application of superior military force alone will never force the communists in Viet Nam to give up.

He is Air Force Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Edward G. Lansdale.

Gen. Lansdale believes it is a "people's war" — not an ordinary one — and can be won only by gaining the allegiance of the people. And that, he says, cannot be done by guns alone.

He thinks air strikes, artillery and big conventional military operations — especially if conducted without equally vigorous and effective civic, non-military programs — will boomerang and drive people into the arms of the Viet Cong.

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Gen. Lansdale is a veteran of anti-guerilla campaigns — first in the Philippines as confidante of the late President Ramon Magsaysay in the successful struggle against the communist Huks, and in the 1950s as an adviser to the late Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem in the unsuccessful guerilla war against the Viet Cong.

Mr. Lodge contends that the political-economic-social problems of Viet Nam are equally as important as military problems. Gen. Lansdale long has preached this theory but, in recent years, without much support from Vietnamese leaders or even some elements of the American military establishment.

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Late last year Gen. Lansdale set forth his philosophy in an article in Foreign Affairs Quarterly titled "Viet Nam: Do We Understand Revolution?" The article made it clear that Gen. Lansdale feared the answer was, "No."

Much has changed in Viet Nam since he wrote the article but he said today that his basic ideas remain unchanged about the nature of the struggle and the kinds of action needed to resolve it.

"The most urgent military need," he wrote at year's end, "is to make it the No. 1 priority for the military to PROTECT and HELP the people. When the military opens fire at long range, whether by infantry weapons, artillery or air strike, on a reported Viet Cong concentration in a hamlet or village full of civilians, the Vietnamese officers who gave those orders and the American advisers who let them 'get away with it' are helping defeat the cause of freedom. The civilian hatred of the military resulting from such actions is a powerful motive for joining the Viet Cong."

"The U.S. military can give a major boost to the political effort simply by upgrading the importance they assign to military-civic action and to guiding the Vietnamese military into accepting it as a basic

soldierly quality in this war, just as the Viet Cong do.

"Civic action means more than giving economic help; it is an attitude of behavior, an extension of military courtesy, in which the soldier citizen becomes the brotherly protector of the civilian citizen. The Viet Cong practice it, under severe penalties for misbehavior."

Gen. Lansdale's article took a dim view of the way Americans generally proposed coping with the Viet Nam problem — disengagement through international accommodation; identifying the struggle as war and making use of "our military proficiency to force the communist regime in Hanoi to cease its adventure in the south"; continuing along the present course (as of the end of 1964) to smother and kill the communist insurgency. He wrote:

"The anomaly in these reactions is that each falls short of the alternative to resist the Viet Cong."

of understanding that the communists have let loose a revolutionary idea in Viet Nam and that it will not die by being ignored, bombed or smothered by us. Ideas do not die in such ways."

He suggested a fourth "reaction" — "To oppose the communist idea with a better idea and to do so on the battleground itself, in a way that would permit the people, who are the main feature of that battleground, to make their own choice." In effect, the "anti-communist" struggle must be converted into a "pro-people" campaign whose objective is to give the people what they want, rather than just defeat the other side.

Gen. Lansdale thinks the U.S. cannot sit aloof from this kind of program for fear of interfering in internal Vietnamese affairs — that we must inculcate in the people the will and incentive to resist the Viet Cong.